

TRAFFIC AND THEATRE RHYMES

BY
GUY BOAS

ILLUSTRATED BY
GABRIEL PIPPET



A collection of humorous verses, the majority of which are from the pages of *Punch*. They deal with the varied and exciting adventures of those who sit in omnibuses or stand in theatre queues, ascend to the gallery or descend to the Underground.

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RHYMES OF THE R.A.F.

BY

CECIL L. M.
BROWN

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THESE verses, collected from the pages of *Punch*, interpret the people of the Royal Air Force, and the manner of their daily lives, in terms of whimsical humour. Those acquainted with the R.A.F. will relish their always gentle satire and fun; and others who may as yet be unfamiliar with our youngest Service could not make friends with it more happily than through the medium of this volume.

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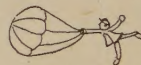
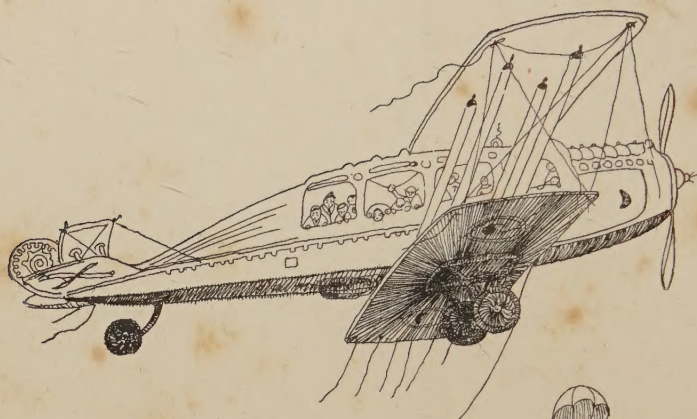
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ART

19/38

TRAFFIC AND THEATRE
RHYMES



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GUY BOAS

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G. B.



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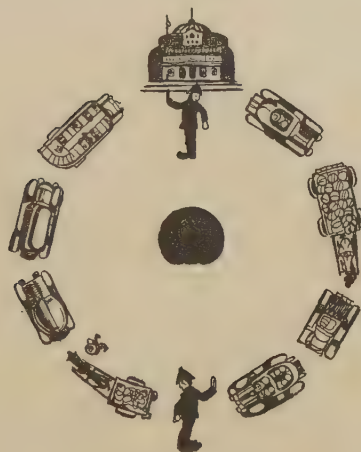
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TRAFFIC RHYMES



I

The Omnibus

THE bus was most embarrassing
In days that have gone by,



The cat sat looking at the king,
Which made the king feel shy ;
The commonest of cats might stare,
Provided that he paid his fare.

But now the bus has changed its shape
And rectified the case,
So cats and kings no longer gape
Each in the other's face ;



Demurely seated two and two,
They're sheltered from each other's view.

Thus from the cat's inspection saved,
The king is much relieved ;
Supposing that he hasn't shaved,
The fact is not perceived ;
Imagination touches in
The Roman nose, the chiselled chin.

When next the bus's shape is changed,



How would it be if all
 The passengers inside were ranged
 With faces to the wall?
 The cat in that case couldn't spy
 Even the back of such as I.

The Taxi

THE men who ride in taxi-cabs
Assume disdainful airs,
No wonder that the driver grabs
All that he can in fares ;
He fancies every bowler hat
Covers a bloated plutocrat.

Observe on his rapacious face
The greed he cannot hide
When seeing that the porters place



All trunks and bags outside ;
For each one they deposit there
Adds threepence extra to the fare.

In traffic blocks he loves to wait ;
Then his expenses cease ;
Yet, though his wheels do not rotate,
His threepences increase ;



Triumphant through the tube he chats
With apoplectic bowler hats.

The men who ride in taxi-cabs
Assume disdainful airs,
No wonder that the driver grabs
All that he can in fares,
And contemplates, with curling lip,
Even the most excessive tip.

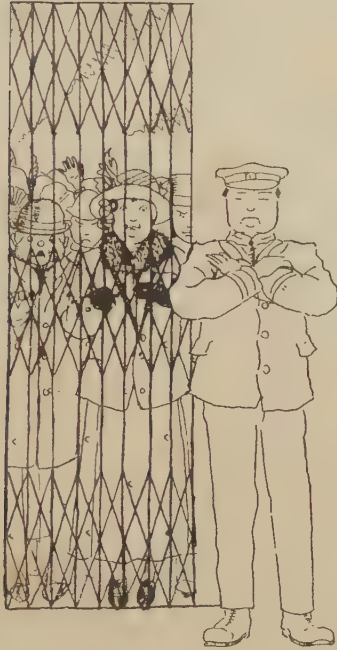
III

The Underground

THE Underground
Goes round and round,
And also to and fro ;
And men in blue
Look after you
And tell you how to go.
They never quite
Direct you right,
Although, of course, they know.

The lift-man's whim
Is being grim ;
He is extremely strict ;
He fines the folk
Who dare to smoke
When once his gates have clicked ;
Nor are his crowd
Ever allowed
To have their pockets picked.

The platform-man
Has got a plan
For dealing with a queue ;



He makes men wait
Behind a gate
Until their train is due ;
They watch their train
Depart again,
And then he lets them through.

But on the car
Take place by far
The most convulsive scenes ;
The car-men gnash
Their teeth and clash
Their double-jointed screens ;
And those for whom
There is no room
Are smashed to smithereens.

The Underground
Goes round and round
And makes a lot of fuss ;
And men in blue
Make fools of you,
Which is ridiculous.
So that is why
For my part I
Am sitting in a bus.

IV

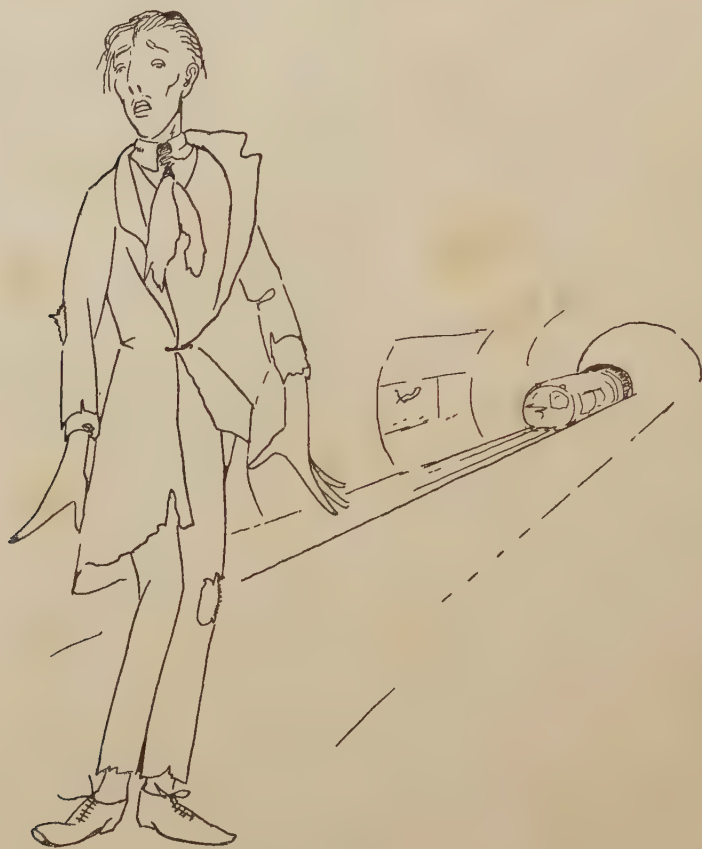
The Rear of the Train

WHEN you struggle with passion,
In desperate fashion,
For room on the footboard, again and again



Officials who find you
Are sure to remind you
“There’s plenty of room in the rear of the train.”

Your coat's torn asunder
So people see under,
A pickpocket's lifted your watch and your chain ;



One end of you's hatless,
The other is spatless—
But think of the room in the rear of the train.

The pressure increases,
Your shirt is in pieces
Which no one can hope to assemble again ;
It's very distressing,
But oh ! what a blessing
To know that there's room in the rear of the train.

The Scooter

SCOOTERS
Ought to have hooters.
The other morning,
Without warning,
A boy
On this so-called toy
Dashed



Round a corner and crashed
Into me.

He tripped ;
I slipped
And put out my knee ;
That's why
I have to lie
Here and nurse it.



Curse it !

VI

The Horse

WHEN Watt was watching the kettle boil
In seventeen sixty-five,

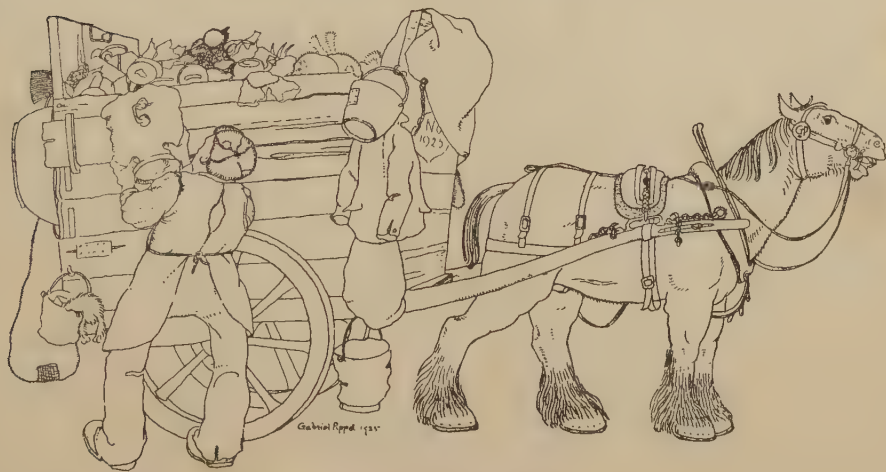


He vowed that horses should not toil
For men who ride and drive ;
“ If steam can lift that lid,” said he,
“ Then steam can carry a man like me.”

The man who invented motor-cars
Thought horses' work was done ;
"Horses," he said, "you can thank your stars,
For your freedom has begun ;
Trot off and spend the rest of your lives
In meadows where nobody rides or drives."

The man who invented the aeroplane
He said to his long-faced friend :
"You never need feel the spur again,
And the whip has come to an end ;
For men who are able to ride in the skies
Won't bump upon you for their exercise."

But nevertheless the horse must toil,
Whatever the latest stunt ;
Not electricity, steam or oil
Will help a man to hunt ;
And in every Borough a horse is bound



To drag the Municipal dust-cart round.

VII

The Tram

SOME say
The day
Of trams
Is past
At last.

They mar
The street,
These trams,
And are
Effete.

I don't,
And won't,
Agree ;
You see
I am
A tram.



VIII

The Underground Engine

THE Underground engine comes out of a tunnel ;
It hasn't a tender, it hasn't a funnel,
It hasn't a stoker, it doesn't need coal,



And the driver looks out of a little glass hole.

IX

The Pedestrian

THE aeroplane, the motor-car,
The omnibus, the tram,



All pass
The silly ass
That I am.

I've no desire to scale the clouds
Or hurtle down the street ;
 I am odd
 Enough to plod
Upon my feet.

X

Strikes

WHEN in time the aeroplane
Supersedes the railway train,
And the airmen do not like
What they're paid, and go on strike,
Will they (as on trains) in hosts
Suddenly forsake their posts,
And thus leave us in the sky,
Very high and very dry ?
If they do, I hope the brutes
Won't take all the parachutes.

Headlights

THE traffic has a thousand eyes
 That gaze and gleam and glare ;
 They never wink,
 They never blink,
 They only stare and stare ;
 Such evil eyes
 Can hypnotise
 Poor country folk like us,
 And that is why
 My wife and I



Are underneath this bus.

XII

Contact

WHEN a puffer
Hits a buffer,



One of them is bound to suffer :

If the puffer,
Then the buffer
Proves itself to be the tougher :

If the buffer,
Then the puffer
Proves itself to be the rougher.

If the puffer
And the buffer
Both unhappily should suffer,

Then the buffer
Knows the puffer
Must be driven by a duffer.





XIII

The Traction Engine

O YOU great big traction-engine,
May I trundle to Stonehenge in
You?—and cart the stones to Town,
Just for the fun of dumping them down
Where they'd look extremely silly—
Right in the middle of Piccadilly.

XIV

The Dining-Car

“**H**AS this train a dining-car ? ”
“ Yes, sir, down the corridor.”
“ Does that mean my walking far ?
—I’ve been caught like that before.”
“ No, sir, just a step or two,
Then I think you’ll smell the stew.”



I have walked for half a mile,
But I do not smell the stew.
Waiter, when I find you I'll
Tell you what I think of you.
Now my way's completely blocked,
This confounded door is locked.

This must be the dining-car ;
It is full : that is a shame.
But, since I have come so far,
I will not give up the game.
I will stand and wait until
Somebody has had his fill.

Forty minutes I have stood :
Soon, I fancy, I shall die.

There's that waiter! If I could,
How I'd like to black his eye!
"Booby, if I would be fed,
Must I stand here till I'm dead?"

"Naturally, sir, you've tried
Vainly to get through that door,
The engine's on the other side.
As I told you, sir, before,
The dining-car, if you would sup,



Is *down* the corridor, not *up*."

XV

The Communication Cord

H^E was a millionaire



Whom railway journeys bored;
But money helped him there,

Because he could afford,
Whenever he felt dull, to drug
A fellow-passenger with wine,



And throw him out upon the line,
Then put a fiver down, and tug
The communication cord.

The Old Order

THE end of horses is at hand,
The motorists have tarred the land,



So that a horse can scarcely stand.

Then ask the horses whether they
Would rather all be put away,
And listen to the answering "Neigh!"



XVII

Comfort

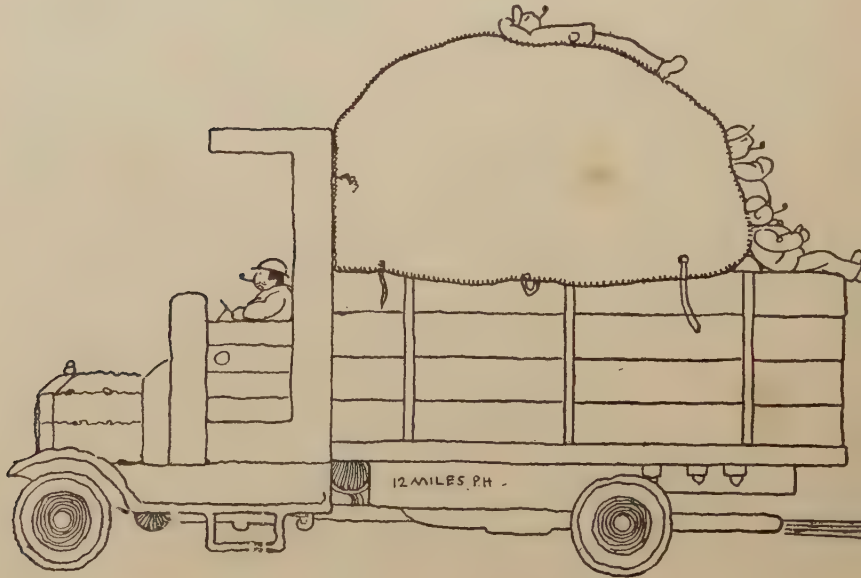
MEN share a taxi, men share a train,
Men share a bus or a tram.
I don't care
What men share :



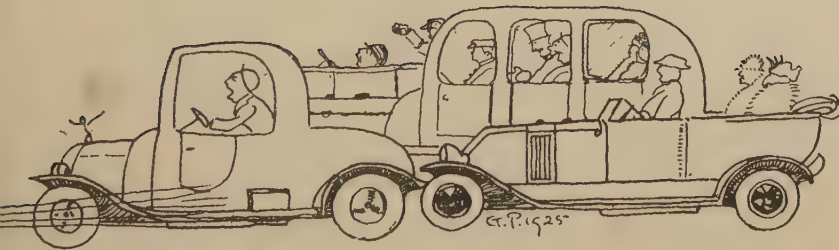
I ride alone in my pram.

The Lorry

I'M sorry,
But the lorry
Is noisy and unsightly :
No man alive
Could hope to drive
A thing like that politely.
It hasn't got pneumatic tyres,
And every minute it back-fires.



Chauffeur nor groom
Has any room
To pass it from the rear ;
They shout and hoot
Behind the brute,
But cannot make it hear.
If there should be a traffic race
The lorry would achieve first place.

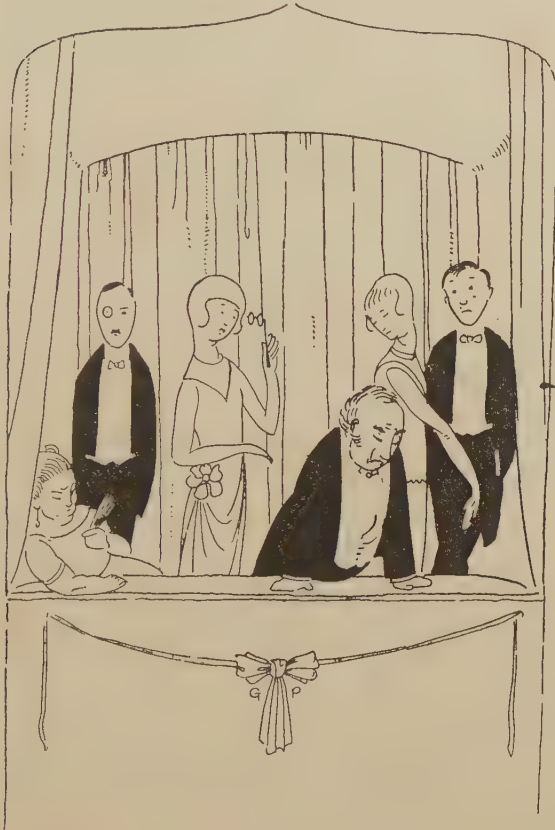


THEATRE RHYMES



The Box

WHEN sitting in a box, don't grouse ;
Although you have a view
Of only half the stage,



the House
Sees almost all of you.

II

The Censor

THE Censor has to spend his days
Reading extremely shocking plays ;
And this is rather hard on him
Because, of course, he's very prim
And at all coarseness takes offence, or
They never would have made him Censor
When working you should see him blush



And pencil in the margin " Hush ! "

At times the nature of his toil
Causes his honest blood to boil ;
At other time his blood runs cold,
Which makes him prematurely old.
So soon the Censor will retire
And then the country must acquire
Another man to take his place.
I can't imagine in that case
A man as sensitive as you
With such appalling work to do ;
No, when the Censor's on the shelf,

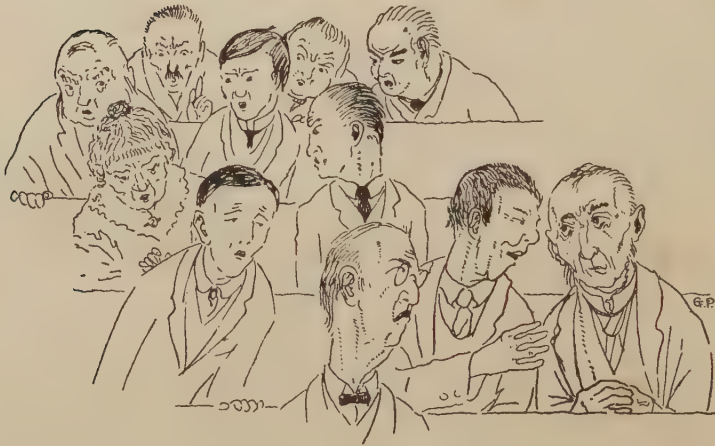


I'll try to get the job myself.

III

The Audience

HE seemed to have so much to say
Into his neighbour's ear
That those about him found the play
Impossible to hear.



Perceiving that he must be cowed,
A man in front looked grim,
And, turning round, said "Hush" so loud
That I said "Hush" to him.

Although I thought I said the word
As softly as could be,
A lady just behind me heard
And she said "Hush" to me.

She made a penetrating sound
Which caused a general stir,
And half a dozen men turned round
And they said "Hush" to her.

The whole House then looked black as death ;
You should have seen them flush
With anger as they all took breath
Together and said "HUSH."

IV

The Box Office

WHEN the play's unsuccessful the Box-Office man



Has leisure, and reads every novel he can,
Making hay while the sun shines, for, as you may guess,
He is badgered to death when the play's a success.

From ten in the morning till ten in the night
There's a queue at his window obscuring the light,
Every member of which is in need of advice
As to which seats are best at a moderate price.

And, while he is trying to deal with the queue
(As a rule it is just as he's getting to you),

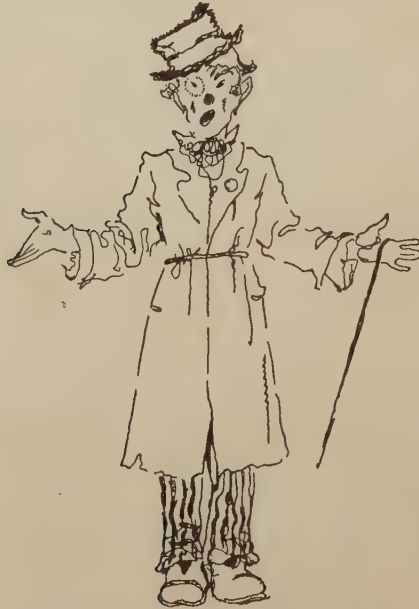


The telephone rings, and he has to reply
That he's nothing but stalls till the end of July.

So on a first night, when the show proves a frost
And the manager weeps when he thinks what it cost,
The Box-Office man has a satisfied look ;
To-morrow at Mudie's he'll choose a new book.

The Queue

STANDING in a theatre queue
Is an expensive thing to do.
Street entertainers, hat in hand,
Throng to amuse you while you stand ;
One man sings, another fiddles,



One recites and asks you riddles ;

This man whistles,



that man capers
Or makes designs by tearing papers ;
Another simply volunteers
To roll his eyes and wag his ears.

.
It costs too much to pay them all,
So slip away and buy a stall.



The Playwright

IF you wish to write drama to capture the stage
You must castigate all the defects of the age.
You must picture Society as a morass



In which every man is a knave or an ass ;
In which every woman's a flirt or a shrew
With too much to spend and too little to do.

They have cast aside shame and ambition and hope,
They all of them drink and they most of them dope.
The gentlemen bully and gamble and swear ;



The ladies mix cocktails and shingle their hair.
The gentlemen occupy most of their lives
In paying attentions to other men's wives ;
The ladies so rashly make free with their charms
That they're found by their husbands in other men's arms.
When thus they're discovered, all parties of course
Proceed with delight to arrange a divorce.
If Society thus you're prepared to arraign,
It will flock to your drama again and again,
And although it's unlikely to see that you meant
To chasten its folly and make it repent,
It will listen delighted to all that you say
And applaud you for writing a capital play.

VII

The Cloak Room

YOU, who can afford to pay
Sixpence extra at the play,
Hand whatever things you can
Over to the cloak-room man.
We, who can't afford to do
Likewise, need not envy you;
For, when humble folk like us



Are already in the bus,

You, luxurious aristocrat,



Still are fighting for your hat.

VIII

The Curtain

WHEN the curtain goes down at the end of the play,
The actors and actresses hurry away.



Titania, Bottom, and Quince, being stars,
Can afford to drive home in their own private cars.

Hippolyta, Starveling, and Flute are in luck,
They've been offered a lift in a taxi by Puck ;

While Snout and Egeus and Helena cram
With Theseus and Oberon into a tram ;

And Snug and Lysander and Philostrate pop
In a bus, and Demetrius clammers on top.



With the chorus of fairies no bus can compete,
So they are obliged to trudge home on their feet :

It seems rather hard on the poor little things,
After flying about all the evening with wings.

IX

The Opera Tenor

THE Opera Tenor is handsomely paid,
And deserves every cent he may earn,
Because, if he wishes to master his trade,
There are so many tricks he must learn.

He must know how to dance and to fence and to ride,
He must know how to groan and to faint,
He must know how to woo or to murder a bride,
And to play the guitar and to paint.

He must know how a fiery dragon is floored
If he wishes to play in the *Ring*,



And how on an anvil to fashion a sword
Without ever ceasing to sing.

In *Tosca* they shoot him in front of a wall,
And, although dummy bullets are used,
Unless he has practised the right way to fall
He is sure to get very much bruised.

In *Cavalleria* he's stabbed with a knife,
A process he does not survive ;
In *Samson* he's thankful to take his own life,
In *Aida* he's buried alive.

And, should he live on, still his end is not tame,
He is never consigned to the shelf ;



As a rule he is wed to some carolling dame
Who is even more stout than himself.

X

Hats

I'VE sat on my topper a
Lot at the opera :



Now it's as flat
As an opera hat.



The Critic

THE critic of the morning Press
Devotes his day to idleness ;



But then he has to sit and write
His notice very late at night,

When he would so much rather be
Tucked up in bed like you and me.
No wonder he's a trifle sharp
And shows a tendency to carp.

Captious and cross the critic creeps
Exhausted into bed and sleeps.



Rising next day in buoyant mood
He feels once more that life is good ;
Springs out of bed and cuts a caper
And asks to see the morning paper.
His cheeks turn pale ; his eyes grow wet ;
He's filled with infinite regret,
As he peruses in the light
The brutal things he wrote last night.

XII

The Pantomime

REGULARLY at Christmas-time
We're taken to the Pantomime ;
We think it childish, but we go



Because Papa enjoys it so.

The Programme

IT'S lucky in theatres they turn out the light,
Or I should be reading my programme all night ;
There's so much to read that I easily might.



It sets competitions and asks me to guess
The name of an actress beginning with S,
And tells me odd things she's prepared to confess.

It says who is who in the green-room, and deals
With what the handwriting of actors reveals,
Their favourite colours and favourite meals.

And while I was reading my vision might stray
Even into a corner where, buried away,
I'd discover the name and the cast of the play.

XIV

The Entertainment Tax

WHEN the Treasury have spent
All the cash they have in store,
Strange devices they invent
With a view to getting more ;
And I think those maniacs
Never found a stranger way
Than their stratagem to tax
My attendance at the play.

I am taxed on my cigar,
On my whisky and my wine ;
They would tax my motor-car
If one happened to be mine.
Well, I'm ready to admit
Wine and whisky and cigars
Do enliven me a bit,
So, I'm sure, would motor-cars.

But enjoyment at a play
Is uncertain, as you know ;
Frequently I come away



Saying, " What a rotten show ! "
Yet the rule is not relaxed,
And it's never been explained
Why the deuce I should be taxed
When I've not been entertained.



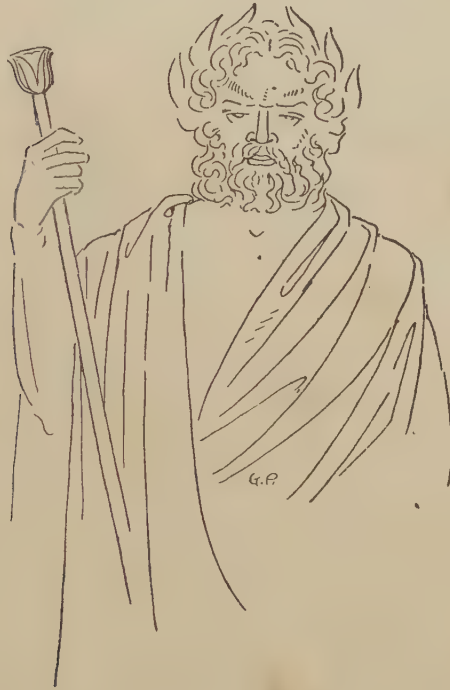
XV

The Gallery

THE gods in the gallery sit on high
And brood on dramatic affairs,
They are not very easy to satisfy,
For they've climbed up a hundred stairs,
After standing an hour in a queue in the street
And paying a bob for a very hard seat.

The Duke in his box may take his rest,
The Marquess may snooze in his stall,
The Earl in the circle, where every one's dressed,
Into fitful dreams may fall ;
But the gods from their moderate livelihoods
Have paid a bob, and they want the goods.

They are ready to clap and to stamp like mad
If they're given a decent show ;
They will probably boo if they think it bad,
So, whoever may sleep below,
The actor must think of the gods up there
Who are always awake and who really care.





The Repertory Actor

THE repertory actor earns
 My very high respect,
 For think of all the parts he learns
 And has to recollect ;
 And when he acts in Shakespeare's plays
 His life's an almost hopeless maze.

On Monday, as *Antonio*,
 He dodges *Shylock's* knife ;
 On Tuesday, being *Prospero*,
 He leads the simple life ;
 On Thursday he must go to death
 As *Lear* ; on Friday as *Macbeth*.

At Wednesday's matinée he's made
 To play the fool and chaff
 As *Touchstone*, or as *Quince* he's paid
 To make the children laugh ;
 At night he must appear again
 To play the melancholy Dane.

.

Oh, why is *Juliet* amazed ?
 Why does she turn her back
 On *Romeo*, and look so dazed ?
 By Jove, his face is black !
 He thinks it is the night, poor fellow,
 On which he has to play *Othello*.

XVII

Chocolates

HERE the seats are ; George, old man,
Get some chocolates while you can.

Quick, the curtain's going to rise,
(Either Bradbury's or Spry's).

"The Castle ramparts, Elsinore"
(That's not sufficient, get some more).



There's the *Ghost* : he does look wan
(Help yourself, and pass them on).

Doesn't *Hamlet* do it well?
(This one is a caramel).

Polonius's beard is fine
(Don't you grab; that big one's mine).

Look, the *King* can't bear the play
(Throw that squashy one away).

Now the *King* is at his prayers
(Splendid, there are two more layers).

Hamlet's going for his mother
(Come on, Tony, have another).

Poor *Ophelia*! Look, she's mad
(However many's Betty had?).

The *Queen* is dead, and so's the *King*
(Keep that lovely silver string).

Now even *Hamlet* can no more
(Pig! You've dropped it on the floor).

That last Act's simply full of shocks
(There's several left, so bring the box).

XVIII

Seats

PHYLLIS, when she is my guest,
Likes dress circle seats the best.

Daphne has to have a stall,
Or she will not go at all.

Iris, with her lovely frocks,
Lets me take her to a box.



Peggy by my side will sit,
Quite contented, in the pit.

.

If a bridegroom I should be,
Peggy is the girl for me.

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